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H1N1 Vaccination Information for Seniors (over age 65)

Actions To Take This Flu Season

Get Your Seasonal Flu Shot

The best way to prevent seasonal flu is by getting a seasonal flu vaccination each year. CDC recommends that people 65 and older get their regular, or “seasonal,” flu vaccine as soon as it is available. This year is no exception as seasonal flu viruses are expected to readily circulate along with H1N1 flu viruses during this flu season. Also, when the H1N1 flu vaccine becomes available for people 65 years and older, you should get that vaccine, as well.

Get Your Pneumonia Shot

Persons aged 65 years and older should get their pneumonia shot, including previously unvaccinated persons and persons who have not received this vaccine within 5 years (and were 65 years of age at the time of vaccination). All person who have unknown vaccination status should receive one dose of this vaccine.

Protect Yourself

Wash hands often, cover coughs, avoid people who are sick, and if you become sick, stay home.

Seek medical advice quickly if you develop flu symptoms

Contact you doctor to see whether you might need medical evaluation or possibly treatment with antiviral medications. Flu symptoms include fever plus cough or fever plus sore throat, and runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people may also have vomiting and diarrhea. People may be infected with the flu, including H1N1 flu, and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.

H1N1 Flu Information

The H1N1 influenza virus does not seem to affect people over age 65 in the same way that seasonal flu does. Most people who have been sick from this new virus have been younger. People 65 and older are less likely to get infected with the H1N1 virus. Laboratory tests on blood samples show that older people may have some pre-existing immunity to the H1N1 flu virus.

CDC has not recommended that people 65 and older get the earliest doses of H1N1 flu vaccine. This is because people age 65 and older are less likely to get sick with the H1N1 flu virus. Because there will be limited amounts of H1N1 vaccine available, the first doses are recommended for those who are most likely to get infected and spread the virus, such as children. In Rhode Island, it is expected that H1N1 flu vaccine will be made available to those 65 years and older in mid-January. These vaccines will be given at public clinics. Details about these clinics will be released when it becomes available.

If you would like more information on H1N1 flu, please visit the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu.